

P.-J. PROUDHON



SOME LETTERS



**PRINCIPLES, PROPOSITIONS &
DISCUSSIONS
FOR LAND & FREEDOM**

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD TO THE
'ANARCHIVE'
"Anarchy is Order!"

*'I must Create a System or be enslav'd by
another Man's.
I will not Reason & Compare: my business
is to Create'
(William Blake)*

During the 19th century, anarchism has developed as a result of a social current which aims for freedom and happiness. A number of factors since World War I have made this movement, and its ideas, disappear little by little under the dust of history.

After the classical anarchism – of which the Spanish Revolution was one of the last representatives—a 'new' kind of resistance was founded in the sixties which claimed to be based (at least partly) on this anarchism. However this resistance is often limited to a few (and even then partly misunderstood) slogans such as 'Anarchy is order', 'Property is theft',...

Information about anarchism is often hard to come by, monopolised and intellectual; and therefore visibly disappearing. The 'anarchive' or 'anarchist archive' Anarchy is Order (in short **A.O**) is an attempt to make the '**principles, propositions and discussions**' of this tradition available again for anyone it concerns. We believe that these texts are part of our own heritage. They don't belong to publishers, institutes or specialists.

These texts thus have to be available for all anarchists and other people interested. That is one of the conditions to give anarchism a new impulse, to let the 'new

anarchism' outgrow the slogans. This is what makes this project relevant for us: we must find our roots to be able to renew ourselves. We have to learn from the mistakes of our socialist past. History has shown that a large number of the anarchist ideas remain standing, even during the most recent social-economic developments.

'Anarchy Is Order' does not make profits, everything is spread at the price of printing- and papercosts. This of course creates some limitations for these archives.

Everyone is invited to spread along the information we give . This can be done by copying our leaflets, printing texts from the CD (collecting all available texts at a given moment) that is available or copying it, e-mailing the texts to friends and new ones to us,... Become your own anarchiv!!!

(Be aware though of copyright restrictions. We also want to make sure that the anarchist or non-commercial printers, publishers and authors are not being harmed. Our priority on the other hand remains to spread the ideas, not the ownership of them.)

The anarchiv offers these texts hoping that values like **freedom, solidarity and direct action** get a new meaning and will be lived again; so that the struggle continues against the

*“...demons of flesh and blood, that sway scepters down
here;
and the dirty microbes that send us dark diseases and
wish to
squash us like horseflies;
and the will-‘o-the-wisp of the saddest ignorance.”
(L-P. Boon)*

The rest depends as much on you as it depends on us.
Don't mourn, Organise!

Comments, questions, criticism, cooperation can be sent
to A.O@advalvas.be.

A complete list and updates are available on this
address, new texts are always

WELCOME!!

SOME LETTERS

P.-J. PROUDHON

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TO MR. BERGMANN

SEPTEMBER 29, 1842

**Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon; (1875) Tome
Deuxième Librairie Internationale; Paris.pgs. 62-63**

My dear Bergmann, I will not attend the ceremonies of congress. I have saved a little bit of money to provide me with this pleasure; the failure of a commercial treaty has depleted my resources. But the monetary defeat is the least of my troubles; a workroom I cannot quit for a second, tests to read, a manuscript to produce, and the quick passage of time that continually surprises me, do not allow me to allow me to keep any time for pleasure and friendship. You can complain to me but you cannot blame me for this difficult time, for which I apologize.

I have finished polishing off my new publication. You will find in it, placed under the protection of your name, the piece that I was going to present to MM and the scholars of Strasbourg: it is entitled Metaphysics. Do not let this word produce in you a hostile reaction. Under a name which up until now explains nothing, I gave the theory of universal law; in a word, I added a fourth tome to the following series: geometry, arithmetic, algebra. This is nothing other than a new science, from which I expect a radical revolution in that which is called philosophy, as my ideas on property demand a radical revolution in jurisprudence. (You feel that I am placing myself here, as I must, outside of the immediate application, where I have no mission.)

In very little time, you will receive a copy of the inscription I want to make to you in this chapter. I hope to keep the personal manner that we use to address one

another, unless you feel that that would be of poor taste. Let me know what you think.

There is one more question put forth in the congresses prospectus that interests me: Why a neutral plural noun, in Greek, is used with a singular verb. Please teach me why, as I would greatly appreciate it.

I received, a long time ago, a letter from Ackermann I forgot that this letter was sent to me in yours. He speaks to me about his loves: the person he talks about is the most celestial that he has ever seen; he attests a devotion to her that would transform itself into martyrdom. It appears that up until now our friend has only known warmth and tenderness. I learned through Maguet that Ackermann is beginning to feel at home; after the relationship in Haag, which has also just produced a rich marriage, Ackermann is looking at from 3 to 4,000 francs. With that in mind, I understand why one would be in love, and why desire pushes you towards founding a family.

I have decided to dismantle my printing press at all costs; I am waiting to finish my book and the laborers will start.

It is once again a question of finding a small job on the side; that depends on the prefecture; I have no idea how this will all work out.

I send my strongest affection from the bottom of my heart, and beg of you to send me something from you.

P-J. PROUDHON

MARX'S LETTER WRITTEN TO PIERRE JOSEPH
PROUDHON (IN PARIS), ASKING HIM TO JOIN
THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE.

BRUSSELS, MAY 5, 1846

Dear Proudhon:

Since I left Paris I have often thought of writing to you, but circumstances beyond my control have prevented me from doing it. Please believe me that overbusyness and vexations connected with moving to another house are the only reasons for my silence.

And now in media res. Together with two of my friends, Frederick Engels and Philippe Gigot (both of them in Brussels), I have organized a continuing Correspondence [Committee] with German communists and socialists not only for a discussion of scientific questions but also for a review of popular writings and socialist propaganda, as a means of using them in Germany. The main aim of our Correspondence, however, will be to bring German socialists in contact with French and English socialists, to inform foreigners about socialist movements in Germany and Germans in Germany about the progress of socialism in France and England. In this way, differences of opinion can come to light, and one can attain an exchange of ideas and impartial criticism. This is a step the socialist movement has to take in its literary expression in order to get rid of nationalistic limitations. And at the moment of action it is certainly extremely useful for everyone to be informed about affairs abroad as much as about those in his own country.

In addition to the communists in Germany, our Correspondence will also include German socialists in

Paris and London. Our contacts with the English are already established; as to France, we all believe that we could find there no better correspondent than yourself. You know that the English and the Germans have hitherto honored you more than your own countrymen.

Thus you see that what is involved here is the creation of a regular Correspondence and to secure for it the means of following the socialist movement in various countries, to attain rich and manifold results which no individual could achieve by his own work alone.

Should you accept our proposition, the postage of the letters you will receive, as well as those which you forward to us, will be paid here, since the money collections in Germany are designed to cover the cost of the Correspondence.

The local address you would use is: M. Philippe Gigot, 8 rue Bodenbrock. This is also the address for letters sent from Brussels.

I need not add that this whole Correspondence must be kept in strictest secret on your part, since we have to be careful not to compromise our friends in Germany.

Please reply soon, and accept the assurance of my sincere friendship.

Your devoted
KARL MARX

TO KARL MARX

LYON, 17 MAY 1846

(From Correspondence, 1874-5)

My dear Monsieur Marx,

I gladly agree to become one of the recipients of your correspondence, whose aims and organization seem to me most useful. Yet I cannot promise to write often or at great length: my varied occupations, combined with a natural idleness, do not favour such epistolary efforts. I must also take the liberty of making certain qualifications which are suggested by various passages of your letter.

First, although my ideas in the matter of organization and realization are at this moment more or less settled, at least as regards principles, I believe it is my duty, as it is the duty of all socialists, to maintain for some time yet the critical or dubitive form; in short, I make profession in public of an almost absolute economic anti-dogmatism.

Let us seek together, if you wish, the laws of society, the manner in which these laws are realized, the process by which we shall succeed in discovering them; but, for God's sake, after having demolished all the a priori dogmatisms, do not let us in our turn dream of indoctrinating the people; do not let us fall into the contradiction of your compatriot Martin Luther, who, having overthrown Catholic theology, at once set about, with excommunication and anathema, the foundation of a Protestant theology. For the last three centuries Germany has been mainly occupied in undoing Luther's shoddy work; do not let us leave humanity with a similar mess to clear up as a result of our efforts. I applaud with

all my heart your thought of bringing all opinions to light; let us carry on a good and loyal polemic; let us give the world an example of learned and far-sighted tolerance, but let us not, merely because we are at the head of a movement, make ourselves the leaders of a new intolerance, let us not pose as the apostles of a new religion, even if it be the religion of logic, the religion of reason. Let us gather together and encourage all protests, let us brand all exclusiveness, all mysticism; let us never regard a question as exhausted, and when we have used our last argument, let us begin again, if need be, with eloquence and irony. On that condition, I will gladly enter your association. Otherwise - no!

I have also some observations to make on this phrase of your letter: at the moment of action. Perhaps you still retain the opinion that no reform is at present possible without a coup de main, without what was formerly called a revolution and is really nothing but a shock. That opinion, which I understand, which I excuse, and would willingly discuss, having myself shared it for a long time, my most recent studies have made me abandon completely. I believe we have no need of it in order to succeed; and that consequently we should not put forward revolutionary action as a means of social reform, because that pretended means would simply be an appeal to force, to arbitrariness, in brief, a contradiction. I myself put the problem in this way: to bring about the return to society, by an economic combination, of the wealth which was withdrawn from society by another economic combination. In other words, through Political Economy to turn the theory of Property against Property in such a way as to engender what you German socialists call community and what I will limit myself for the moment to calling liberty or equality. But I believe that I know the means of solving

this problem with only a short delay; I would therefore prefer to burn Property by a slow fire, rather than give it new strength by making a St Bartholomew's night of the proprietors ...
Your very devoted

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

TO MR. MAGUET¹

PARIS, JUNE 28, 1848

**Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon; (1875) Tome
Deuxième Librairie Internationale; Paris.pgs.337-338**

My dear Maguet; your concern and friendship touch me very deeply. It is very dear to me to know that souls such as your own extend their sympathy, when I am a horror to so many people.

The insurrection has given up, but it is not conquered. Thousands are being arrested; if the orders are severe, we can expect to see 20,000 citizens thrown in prison. A decree by the National Assembly that was issued tonight, assigns each one of them to military duties and deports them out of the Continent. The conquering bourgeois are as ferocious as tigers; the whole province is pouring in, as if a terrible flood was seriously threatening the family and property.

The papers capitalize on the error in the situation, spreading the libel and deceiving the country.

It's all happening again, I assure you; half if not three-quarters of the population of Paris has been shaken up. I saw it with my own eyes; if they did not participate in the insurrection, the reason for it was the spontaneity of the movement and the uncertainty of the motive.

Red flag, black flag, white flag, tri-colored flag; some socialists, some bonapartists, some English, some Russians, some convicts: it's really a confusing mix.

The unhappy bourgeois of Paris is at bay. Like the workers, they flagrantly demand work, credit, and bread. And I assure you that it is not the Assembly that will give it to them. In two weeks, we will be at the bottom of the darkest pit; returning to business as usual is

impossible by ordinary means. Another helping hand is inevitable and will be decisive.

The National Assembly is giving a pitiful showing due to its indecisiveness and stupidity. These are the church-sellers that agitate the Republic. I will only be soothed when the people are breathing down our necks. P. Leroux is ruined just like L. Blanc. There is only me who has not yet said anything; I only want to speak about positive questions. But I will be clear, categorically; I will ask the casus belli. It will be known where we are coming from, I hope, from my first words.

Governor sends his regards.

Until next time, highest regards my dear Maguet.

P-J. PROUDHON

TO MR. PAUTHIER¹

AUGUST 24, 1848

**Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon; (1875) Tome
Deuxième Librairie Internationale; Paris. pgs. 345-346**

My dear Pauthier, my popularity, as you very well pointed out, is horrifying, and the political horizon is so wild that I would like to ask for your hospitality for a few days in Ville-Evrard, provided that this would not disturb you. There, we would have the time to do my biography and to respond to your courageous Germans.

My paper has just been suspended, for the second time, by the council of ministers. The application of the law appears not to be enough for these gentlemen: they prefer a state of warfare. When will it end? I dare answer: never! No, this state of warfare will never end by will of the government; it will only end by the will of the people. That suggests that France is ruled by the sword until it she becomes the Democratic and Social Republic. Get it together!

The discussion of the Investigation is forming; I highly doubt that it will take place without it falling into the hands of both sides of the Assembly.

This is where we are! I struggled to attach a goal, a name, a cause, a reality, and spirit to the February Revolution, en proclaiming the principal of free credit and of the progressive reduction of all rent and interest, accomplished without despoilment and expropriation, and in benefit of all. It is this that they are desperately trying to slander. But the idea, the seed, is planted; it will grow, no matter what they say, and will cover the earth with its branches. I only have to water the planted seed and wait.

We are in a horrible state of confusion. Except for me, the person who knows what he wants and sees the situation clearly, I see no intelligence which is not misguided. In this electric storm, the spark will not wait long before leaving; what will it produce? I am very worrisome and almost scared. The bonapartist, orleanist and legitimate reaction, is winning; the partisans of the three candidates are aligned, and I have no doubt that the government itself is in on the conspiracy. They are waiting for a special occasion to let themselves be known; they need a hand and they are looking for it. The people, warned, are on the look out and do not dare to move a muscle; this is what greatly vexes the most inquiring minds. But the situation, much too equivocal to last long, has formed as such and consequently the only thing to do is wait.

So tell me, my dear Pauthier, could you offer me a small glass of milk for a few days, in case occurrences force me to take a vacation?

Also tell me, if the need should arise, could I use your apartment on Saint-Dominique street?

You can see that I am being very cautious. I am not yet a conspirator, but I must think of my safety as if I was!

Until we meet again, best wishes.

P-J. PROUDHON

[Return to Proudhon's Collected Works](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/ProudhonCW.html)
http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/ProudhonCW.html

1. Translated from the French by Rory Van Loo

TO MR. ABRAM¹

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1848.

**Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon; (1875) Tome
Deuxième Librairie Internationale; Paris. pgs.347-
348.**

My dear Abram, you have surely been informed, as much by our newspaper as by the other press, of the vicissitudes of the Representative of the People. Three consecutive seizures, and finally a suspension, testify as to the systematic war being waged by the power of the democratic and socialist ideas.

The Representative of the People has ceased to live. Its role, completely personal up until now, is finished.

We are going to reappear under the name People, collective organ of the extreme left of the National Assembly. You will currently receive only the prospectus.

At present time, the mother idea has been launched, now that the morality of the June events has been resurrected and the work is done, we are going to throw ourselves into detailed questions, and above all into war on the Royalty, which is coming at us from all sides. On this terrain, they will not prosecute me and I will obtain exactly the same result.

We consist of a company with 100,000 francs in capital.

We have many subscribers and strong signatures; unfortunately, even with the best of circumstances, we currently can not find money.

We can not end our affair regarding the 24,000 francs. I therefore accept with pleasure your civil offer, and assure you that, while waiting for the dividends, I offer

to make you among our principal founders and shareholders.

The most beautiful future, such as a daily paper, is promised to us. Our last printing has gone from 20 to 25,000 copies. With a little money for propaganda, we fully expect to arrive at 50,000. The perfect unity and variety of our editorial staff; our ideas, by themselves quite elevated; the originality of our comments; the unassailable cohesion of our doctrine; the popularity; all taken together, it assures our success.

The royalist conspiracy looks to be discovered. Give me only a month to attack it and I guarantee a royal crown would be impossible.

So long, my dear Abram, I am obsessed; if you do not send us your bill by post or otherwise, I will take the liberty to deduct the total cost of your subscription.

Your friend and compatriot,

P-J. PROUDHON

1. Translated from the French by Rory Van Loo

TO MR. MAURICE¹

PARIS, FEBRUARY 15, 1849

**Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon; (1875) Tome
Deuxième Librairie Internationale; Paris. pgs.359-
362.**

My dear Maurice, your letter has finally arrived with great remorse, and for the last two weeks since I received it, it has weighed heavily on my conscience. I promise you that I have thought many times, for six months now, not only to write you, but also just about you. I no longer respond to anyone, and I am hardly reading my mail. If, instead of 25 francs per day, the salary of a Representative was 50, I would have two secretaries specifically for reading the letters pamphlets and newspapers which rain down on me; to classify them, acknowledge acceptance, and respond. Overworked as I am, I neither work nor do anything. I even neglect my friends; and this same history of not writing to you is repeated with Micaud, Grenier, the Gauthier brothers, Dr. Briot, etc.

I have a newspaper I must look over, perform administrative functions for, and edit. This is already a considerable task which, alone, requires all the energy of one man. We distribute twenty-five thousand on a regular basis.

I have my new bank which has just started its operations in receiving subscriptions and memberships. It is three compatriots that are running it: Guillemin, Mathey, and Prevel. This company alone would take four heads stronger than my own.

My political proceedings are pending, about five or six of them.

Finally, I have my Representative work, which takes about six hours per day.

Only a meticulous organization of all these undertakings and of my time can keep me from disaster.

To cap it all off, yesterday, after hearing my explications, the National Assembly granted permission to prosecute me. I will therefore appear in court in two or three weeks.

I would assign myself in advance six months of prison; if it goes to two years, I prefer to leave the country. My newspaper and my bank would not even suffer for it. You will see my improvised words in the Monitor. Only read them there.

My financial position, besides all that, has hardly improved. When I was made Representative in June, I found myself in behind in several payments and in debt. I paid them all. My expenses have now increased. My brother, who's sicknesses strike often and make him unable to work, has cost me a good deal of money. I also reimbursed D., the producer of my work on the Creation of Order, which cost approximately 1,700 francs.

The public misery and financial difficulties of my friends also cost me a good deal of money. There will be very few Representatives, judging from myself and the Montagnards, who are able to save even a penny from their earnings. Finally, I have 3,000 francs coming from the sale of my works, and placed in the safety of the People, that will come out only to go into my Bank's cash register.

In all appearances, the return from my newspaper and of my publications will bring me enough to live honestly in the future. As far as the Bank is concerned, I must not count on that for quite some time. If the jury acquits me and I am reelected in Paris, no one at that time will be luckier than me, my situation will become very tolerable,

and I will be able to act with a success on an even grander scale to propagate my ideas.

In the future I am therefore expecting to be able to, in waiting to be in a position to reimburse you, as I have done for D, to pay you annually the interest on what I owe you. So please send me an account of what I owe you.

You are thus forcing me, and I say this seriously, to make a will for all my present and future goods. You are second in line after father Renaud. In this revolutionary period of struggle and trial, I can never be too cautious about the interests of my creditors, which after all are my interests as well. So do me a favor and do that which I say as soon as possible; once again, I am much obliged.

I have enclosed the bill that you asked for.

Your letter, my dear Maurice, sometimes shows apprehension, perhaps all too legitimate given my past negligence, that I will forget you. You seem to fear that from this side there is not a reciprocity of friendship and devotion. I beg of you, for my peace of mind and the happiness of my soul, conquer this suspicion. To whom to I divulge deeper secrets than to you? To whom am I forced to run for help, in the most delicate situations, if not you? I have said it to you before: Think, after realizing what is in your heart, about what must be in mine, and rest assured that it is thus.

However, you see very well that my life is a struggle, a ferocious struggle. Today with the fourierists, yesterday with the montagnards; another time with the communists, the socialist women, etc. Always with the economists, the royalists, and the Catholics. I have already several times been taken out of public favor and put back in, following the event that justifies my actions and tactics. I have one hundred letters threatening to shoot me with a pistol, to gorge me, to poison me, to

hang me: and I am still going. The movement in my favor seems already to be sweeping over the little bourgeois of Paris, and this scares the Constitutional. My newspaper is read by 200,000 readers, and since my reconciliation with the Montagne, I am supported by all Republican journals of the province, which gives me, through the realm of ideas, more than a million citizens. My career is only just beginning; and, believe it, will require that I be, just like so many others, even in socialism, a used up and finished man. In the middle of all of that, I often think of my friends; but they must understand my not writing them. I would like very much to take a vacation, to take a trip to Granville and take in the fresh air on the Moineaux islands, and afterwards eat your soup. But who knows? Perhaps the jury will throw me in jail!

So long, my dear friend; doubt me no more, that hurts me; and I have enough tribulations that make me enemies.

Take care.

P-J. PROUDHON

1. Translated from the French by Rory Van Loo

TO M. F.¹

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, MARCH 2, 1849

**Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon; (1875) Tome
Deuxième Librairie Internationale; Paris. pgs.363-
365.**

My dear friend, It is not the least of my faults, since I became a politician, to not be able to spare a moment of time to relax, chat and frolic about. I am a slave, me the legislator and one of the founders of the Democratic and Socialist Republic. If you would like us to meet up one time, please allow me to share a dinner with you and come pick me up at the Assembly around five-thirty; I see this as the only way to catch up with you.

Your skepticism can be seen in each page that you write. A little reflection, however quick, would prove to you to what extent indifference and misanthropy are today very outdated, and you would forgive your poor friend for all the agitation he causes honest people.

I did not provoke the February revolution; I wanted slow, measured, rational, philosophical progress; the events, the foolishness of men, above all among these ceremonial bourgeois that you are a member of, chose otherwise. I promised myself that as long as the fruits of the February revolution were dependent upon me they would not be lost; I said to myself that in one year, we had to ignite a century's worth of cinder, in order to avoid having been completely foolish.

I believe that the goal that I set will be attained; admit how much it will please you that France does not want any Reds: What good does that do? As if it was all attributable to the will of France! as if, in this very moment, we were not being driven by NECESSITY.

But, this necessity must be ripped out, and it is to this end that the socialist and democratic agitation will serve wonderfully. The old world breaks up: I challenge you, with all your philosophy and your old habits, to revive it. Willingly, grudgingly, all of Europe, following France, is embarked on a social revolution that will perhaps bring, and I would very much like this, its authors and its contradictors. No single man has the power to stop it; the poison is taken, absorbed by the social body; let the victim convulse as much as he wants, it will be necessary that he create a new body and that he return what he has taken.

Instead of immobilizing you with a useless critique, which gets us nowhere and which only makes you unhappy with others and yourself, it would be better to work, within the bounds of your temperament, for the revolutionary cause than to bombard it with your sarcastic remarks which says more about your own judgment than it does about the current agitators.

I believe that the Reds are not as strong as the Whites, but they are more honest, and, anyhow, they have the wind at their backs and the current in their favor. It is inevitable, you hear, that the red party take it and that the moderates, confused with the Whites, be conquered and forced into their resistance. What am I saying? It is inevitable that the revolutionary flight begin by the moderate majority herself (organizing something like free credit);-and, once started, you will no longer be able to stop the movement. The makeup of society will be changed, so take your part in it. It is not up to you to decide whether you will be a reactor, after having so much applauded the revolution of 89, which, after all, was only the first part of what is happening now.

P-J. PROUDHON

1. Translated from the French by Rory Van Loo

This is a letter Proudhon wrote to his friend, De Girardin, in which he proposed that De Girardin might want to help him to publish a new daily journal after the **People** was forced to shut down.

To see the original French, [click here](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/girardin3.html)
http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/girardin3.html.

Friend and confederate, the People has been seized, suspended, devastated, occupied militarily. The effects of persecution and of civil war have put us in the position of making it impossible morally, materially, and financially, of repayment. We still have some resistance left; and maybe the wording of the People, in being consistent and in remitting itself to the work with the same devotion since October 1848, could come to the end of making first a weekly publication; then, if we have some success, a biweekly; and finally, if the favor of the public supported it, a daily.

But for all this one needs time; and time is precious and events pass quickly; one needed success, and in a good economy one couldn't have too much to count. Finally, not being afraid of new hindrances, what could stop us from selling in the street, doubly armed with a deposit and with stamps?

All these considerations make us strongly want, me and my collaborators, to resume as quickly as possible our daily edition. We believe that the most sure means of retaking the position that the People conquered in the press is to return immediately to daily publication...

This being decided, I thought immediately, I wanted to notify you, that the only man who could aid us in these circumstances, and who at the same time comprehended the utility for himself, for his ideas, for his party, of doing it, was Mr. Emile de Girardin.

The People and the Press can and must form a formidable alliance one day, or more or less work together; the position that I have tried hard to make take first place in these last days and which you yourself have borrowed, has been proven. The time in politics for wishing and grinding one's teeth is past. It appears that, among the men of ideas, all must remain free.

Finally, your attitude since May 13, an attitude by which you have infiltrated in one blow and without effort, the highest rank of the French republic, and which designates you at all costs as one of the candidates during the new election; this attitude, I say, is the last motive that interests me in reclaiming your good graces; we aren't simply confederates, we have become, dare I say it? nearly religious leaders.

In this situation, I come with frankness to to ask you, friend and confederate, if you could help us in some way with our deposit.

The guarantees that we can offer you are at the same time moral and material: all that I can do at the moment is to say that M. B***, who advanced us 12,000 francs as a deposit upon People, was reimbursed the day we began to fear the seizure of that deposit. Further than that, you are master in this matter, and know better than anybody the precautions to take in this parallel affair.

For the present, you will be referred to Mistrs Guillemin and Mathey, administrators and acountants for People, my devoted friends, that welcome you with open arms, as do I.

In waiting for your response, I am with esteem and
familiarity,
Yours devoted

P.J. PROUDHON

1. Translated from the French by Stephanie Silberstein

TO MR. DE GIRADIN¹

SAINT-PÉLAGE, NOVEMBER 10, 1849

This is a letter that Proudhon wrote to a fellow Frenchman who we wished to work with to promote a socialist revolution.

To see the original French [click here](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/girardin.html)
http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/girardin.html.

Sir, I just read your Fifty-Two; it is useless to tell you how marvelously I understand you. WE ARE, YOU AND I, THE TWO POLES OF THE REVOLUTION; it is inevitable that six months from now we will have turned the old world upside down.

I offer to shortly make your system clear in the Voice of the People. I will do this taking the point of view [offered by] my favorite ideas or, rather, my anti-governmental inclinations; it is by this that we especially differ from one another, and our discussion, if you will, is going to become interesting. I will point out parts of your work that seem flawed to me. You explain them or modify them, each as you choose. But the most important point will be my criticism that, as I see it, you strongly attack property rights, and without knowing it you stand for regulation of everything by the state, and IT FOLLOWS THAT YOU ARE EVEN MORE SOCIALIST THAN I, something that I am not jealous of, assuredly, but which I find very dangerous for your project.

The criticism that I plan to make of your plan won't, in the slightest, do you wrong. Merciful God! You will never be suspected of communism, and you will get all the benefits of my observations, become popular,

become close the upper class, whom you will have the pleasure of having reassured.

As for me, the obnoxious, absurd role that I have been playing for the past six months doesn't permit me to deprive myself of the spontaneously offered support of a man such as Mr. de Girardin. I have been searching for a long time for a man to whom I can give the reputation of premier revolutionary of this age; this man is you. Take measures in consequence. When the Press becomes associated with the Revolution and Voice of the People with the Conservation, maybe finally countries will have confidence in themselves and work towards the future. Only have courage, and defend your system, avouching for carrying it out and for all consequences, and I believe that I before long I will be able to tell you that people do not speak more highly of anyone else but you

Agree, sir, to my amiable salutations.

P.-J. PROUDHON

1. Translated from the French by Stephanie Silberstein

TO THE STATE PROSECUTOR¹

CONCIERGERIE, JUNE 23 1849

This is a letter that Proudhon wrote to the state prosecutor, asking to be restored to his old room and to be allowed visitors while in prison

To view the original French, [click here](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/procurer.html)
http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/procurer.html.

Mr. Prosecutor, permit me to address myself to you in order to obtain my reinstatement into the room which was designated for me by the benevolence of Mr. Rebillot, chief of police, and from which the arrival of the arresting officers on June 13 forced my extraction for the past eight days.

The secret which primarily weighs upon defendants is nearly out; they communicate with one another in the morning and in the evening; they receive the Monitor; and it is to be presumed that soon they will be permitted to receive their parents and friends. I therefore have to pass no messages from one to the other; I wouldn't be at any disadvantage if they learned nothing, about neither the National Assembly, nor the tribunals, nor the acts of our government, nor either the domestic news or that which is happening abroad. The democratic and social press is suppressed; the danger is still nil on this side. As to the people who come to visit me, I declare in all sincerity that they are all intimates, who only come see me in order to relate their affairs, and who surely are not responsible for any messages which could comprise their peace or mine. For more reassurance, finally, I agree that I shall not accept new permission to have visitors until

the day when my new companions in captivity are given back their freedom to communicate.

I await, sir, your decision to send my books, papers, and other objects that I need to return to work, the only means of not dying of boredom and of consumption in prison. You know too well, sir, the price of study, the hygienic and moralistic power, to want to prolong the suffering of a man whose habit his whole life has been to need to work, and to whom the forced retreat from work has created more suffering than is ever necessary.

In the hopes of a favorable response, I present you, Mr. Prosecutor, with my most respectable greetings.

P.-J. PROUDHON

1. Translated from the French by Stephanie Silberstein

TO CHARLES PROUDHON¹

CONCIERGERIE, AUGUST 12 1849

This is a letter Proudhon wrote to his brother, Charles, while in prison, letting him know of his situation and future plans.

To view the original French, [click here](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/cproudhon.html) “http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/cproudhon.html”.

My dear Charles, since you have seen Dessirier, you know almost everything about me being in prison.. The Conciergerie is the ancient palace of St. Louis, transformed into a prison; all the rooms are arched; the prisoners only occupy the first two floors. It is the Conciergerie that once housed Ravailac, Mandrin, Marie Antoinette, the Girondins, Louis Bonaparte, the current president of the republic, and a host of other more or less respectable and famous people. The room that I occupy at the moment is like a miniature cathedral. It receives the day only by a very high window, to which is added metal bars, a lattice of iron and lampshade. It isn't a bad resemblance to a coffin. In the morning they open my door at seven o'clock; I return at night and I am under lock and key until morning. I eat white bread in prison, which is good; I eat thin soup and take for myself the surplus, which I need for the rest of my meals. At the moment while my friends have great zeal for political prisoners, we don't miss rum, red wine, cognac, the wines of Bordeaux, or the other [alcoholic beverages]. I still have my full buffet. I don't feel deprived of anything except for not being able, all this time, to take two walks in the evening after dinner; instead of getting up early in the morning, I sleep late; this makes me soft and lazy.

Since I am condemned to more than a year in prison, I pay 18 francs a month to the establishment, as rent for staying in Paris. This is an imposition on top of captivity; you see that the government knows how to make money off of everybody. If I can't pay these 18 francs, they'll send me to Doullens or who knows where.

I am doing my best on a brochure which will appear shortly

William leaves tomorrow for Geneva; he is going to try to raise the sum of 24,000 francs in order to make a deposit on starting a new magazine. I have the hope that this will achieve more than the other and not cause me much hassle. The pains [associated with his previous political activity] have taken everything out of me; this means [of promoting anarchy] is worn out and I will abstain from it in the future. If only I had four brains! Or if only I could take workers to help me complete my work, just as you take companions to help you with yours! I would make more than my share of money within six months. My publisher will pay me 2000 francs a month if I make a monthly Review for them. They must talk to me about all the costs before that I'll accept. If I go away from you in this circumstance, it is so that you will be convinced that one doesn't regard me here as a dead man, and that one expects something of me. But you know also that I don't conduct myself by money considerations; I therefore won't accept the offer of my publisher just so that I don't do something less lucrative, no doubt, but only according to what is most useful for the public. Because, you see, I appear before the public, and I must have their respect.

Good day, my dear Charles.

Your brother,

P-J. PROUDHON

Translated from the French by Stephanie Silberstein.

TO MR. B-- SON OF FERTÈ-BERNARD¹

MARCH 18, 1850

This is a letter from Proudhon to a young man who had written to him to ask for advice about getting involved with politics. Unfortunately, the anthology this has been taken from does not include letters to Proudhon but only letters from him, so the specifics of the young man's letter must be inferred from this response.

To see the original French, [go here](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/bernard.html)
http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/bernard.html.

Sir, if I may have the honor of acquainting myself with you, if I may take your words seriously and add to them the sincerity of your demand, here is how I permitted myself to respond to you:

You aren't yet seventeen years old, you say; you would like to adopt an opinion and follow a political movement; and, to this end, you ask my advice.

Sir, I really want to warn you that you must not expect a complacent response from me. I will go further than that; I will let you know my motives.

It is not appropriate for you, young man, to get involved in politics and embrace an opinion, especially one that contradicts that of your parents; you haven't yet reached the age where it is permissible for a son of a family to follow his inclinations; and, before you invoke in your favor the precocity of your young experiences, your letter proves to me precisely that you don't yet know what our men of State are like, and that the better writers are those who submerge themselves for a longer

period of time in serious things before picking up the pen.

Whether the realities [you write about] are [realities] of physics, of history, of mathematics, of industry, of commerce, or of practicality doesn't really matter to me; politics is only the cloth more or less agreeable and just from which one dreams up positive ideas and which one furnishes by intellectual and moral work; and you, who are young, you who are just entering life, you who have not yet done anything, you want, as your beginning, to start with radicalism?

And it is I who you are addressing to give you advice? But know, sir, that before becoming a journalist, I was a printer for fifteen years and an apprentice for sixteen, and that I find that my strength still is unequal to the task [of promoting anarchism].

As for my political opinions, which you claim are those of Robespierre and of Ledru-Rollin, I have only one thing to say to you: that I am the antidote to Robespierre, and that I am continually fighting the tendencies of Ledru-Rollin and the men belonging to his movement; you see, therefore, that you must think for a while longer before you can express, in these delicate matters, a conscientious and motivated judgment [of others' ideas].

I therefore don't want to give you any advice, because, besides the fact that you don't have either the age nor the experience necessary to get involved with politics, if my advice doesn't agree with the viewpoint or the feelings of your father about your character, I could, without intending to, make myself responsible for the seduction of a minor, as well as for attempting to usurp the rules of the family and your father's authority.

I will close by wondering whether your letter is anything more but an attempt to distort my character; in

this case, sir, the least you can do to make up for it is to take your "knowledge" about my character to someone who can teach you better than I can; you will discover, no doubt, that I am pure of all charlatanism, and that my life and my intentions have, to the present day, defied slander.

Best regards,

P.-J PROUDHON

TO MISTER ALFRED DARIMON¹

JUNE 12, 1850

Source: Proudhon, P-J (1875). Correspondances, Tome Troisieme, pp.300-301. Librairie Internationale, Paris).

This is a letter from Proudhon to Alfred Darimon, on the subject of his non-publication in **People** and his thoughts about the political situation in France.

To see the original French, [click here](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/darimon.html) "http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/darimon.html".

My dear Darimon, I am sending you, below, a note so that you will have it to insert in tomorrow's **People**, on the non-publication of my work.

You may add some words of reflection saying, basically, that if collaboration with **People** is denied to me, you hope that the use of libraries will not be, and that if you cannot give the reader useful work, he will undoubtedly permit you to return his money.

We have therefore declared war on the upper class by Constitutional, Order, Debates, and Public Opinion, all who secretly defended absolutism in the past. The upper class were, just like the proletariats, ostracized in Europe; one addresses to them all the attacks against the Revolution. After the socialists was the revolution of the Montagards; after the Montagards, the modern republicans; after the Republic, the entire working class; after the working class, the upper class.

Will one understand now? And those whom we have accused for the past year, those who we reproach now, in March and April, one of being modernistic, and the other

of hypocrisy, do they understand that the interest of the two classes are solidary, that their conciliation, their fusion, was the entire revolution?

Remind yourself of this until death: separate every day the coalition of the Jesuites and the bankers, the coalition of Robin Hoods and heads of state, of the upper class and the common people. Make one side the nation, the other the infamous minority of exploiters and parasites.

I don't tell you this at a disadvantage. The genius of the empire, of the restoration and of the corruption is unveiling itself: keep your eyes open.

I give you my hand,

P.J. PROUDHON

1. Translated from the French by [Stephanie Silberstein](#)

TO MR. ETEX¹

Conciergerie, January 14, 1851

This is a letter Proudhon wrote to an artist friend of his. While it is more personal than political, it shows some of Proudhon's character, as well as some of his personal philosophical beliefs.

To see the original, in French, [click here](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/etex.html) (http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/etex.html).

My dear Etex, I want to thank you for the package which you have had the goodwill to send me, of your Elementary Course in Drawing. You remembered that I adore drawing, that I am crazy about the beauty and purity of lines, just as I admire the melody in music.

Maybe it is the disposition of my spirit that makes me indifferent to many pieces of painting and sculpture which, to believe the experts, do not lack merit; this causes me to remain impervious to the quantity of musical compositions where the harmony, assuredly, and the science are abundant, but which, to my ear, do not sing.

Once again, I thank you for having thought of me and for having believed that I could get pleasure out of reading your precepts and studying your examples

How is M^{me} Etex? How are you doing, yourself? Where are you? Having made a grand sculpture and tried a revolutionary style of painting, you have become a professor of art and an author. Where do you stop yourself? What are your plans?

Have you sent something important to the Exposition? I hear tell that you are not afraid to spread my unattractive figure, which attracts the original, who has enough self-

love to laugh at it, and also attracts the artist who cannot but force unfavorable criticism. My dear sculptor, it isn't enough to know how to mold clay and carve marble; one must still, you see, choose subjects which will be agreeable to the public. The President of the Republic isn't as handsome as me; I daresay that he is much uglier.

Send your bust to the Exposition; I am sure that it will find many admirers. For the past eight days, the herd must have been multiplying prodigiously. The National itself cannot refuse them the tribute of its admiration.

My dear Etex, you have suffered in the world from knowing me. Do me the pleasure of going to take this blasted plaster, which I will demand of you someday, if ever; returned to liberty, I can conquer for myself and mine, by my work, a little assistance and recompensate your zealousness for my fame. Remove it from there, I tell you, or else, I warn you, I will solicit permission to leave, and I will cut myself, with my knife, nose, eyes, mouth, face, everything which, finally, could make me recognizable, by name or by number.

Give me, I beg you, by my modesty, or, if you prefer, by my captivity, which modesty can only turn into, this small satisfaction.

You will be obligated essentially to one who, in the most sincere estimate, joins sympathy with the wisdom of having lived long.

P.-J. PROUDHON

1. Translated from the French by Stephanie Silberstein

TO MR. DE GIRADIN¹

CONCIERGERIE, JANUARY 22 1851

This is a letter from Proudhon to his friend De Giradin, stating that the ability to withstand others who would force opposing ideas onto his followers was key to the success of the Revolution

To view the original French, [click here](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/giradin2.html).
"http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/giradin2.html"

Friend and old colleague, according to our conversation of yesterday, at the moment where several ambitious people try hard to throw anew a division into our ranks, I believe it useful to tell you here, in the most quick manner possible, all my thoughts.

We support, my friends and I, and a number of citizens support with us, we defend, same in discussing these acts, against the enterprises of parties and of sects, the whole republican ministry, which, having given the well-founded order in February of security wanted by the circumstances of their formation, will walk faithfully in the lines traced by the Constitution, taking for ruler of her politics, the liberal opinion manifested in the country and will hand over to the government all initiative on the fundamental points of political organization and the social economy.

Our work, to our publicists, is to prepare the opinion;-- the role of the government is to follow the decrees [of public opinion] It is thus that we hear [the voices of] the Republic and the revolution.

Certainly, we believe to have for ourselves the truth; but, if we don't claim to impose our ideas upon others,

we are then determined not to suffer as others impose their ideas upon us

Revolutionaries before us, but republican revolutionaries, that is, those who take the lower road, we demand the largest liberty of discussion, finally assuring the largest freedom of the people to accept [our ideas]. Our enemies, know it well, our only enemies, are those who would be prevented from discussion, or who, without discussion, would force us to suffer as they please for them.

"All ministries who follow these simple politics are sure to live and have nothing to fear from our attacks, the same ones which will wipe out our critics. In these conditions, political crises appear to us, without reason for being, as easy government, order and progress assured.

"You can, according to need, take a share of that of which you have a right to; it is the alpha and the omega of our faith and our ambition."

I give you my hand.

P.-J. PROUDHON

N. B. This letter was written in front of an a facilitator from the Ministry of Transition republican and democratic; this is her only value; she could no longer express the thoughts of the author if the circumstances changed and the situation turned to the disadvantage of the revolution.

1. Translated from the French by Stephanie Silberstein

A M. MARC DUFRAISSE¹

PARIS, MAY 23, 1851

This is a letter that Proudhon wrote to a friend talking about his plans and suggesting that they get involved in politics

To view in the original French, [click here](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/dufraissee.html)
"http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/dufraissee.html"

My dear Marc, I strongly regret that we weren't able to see you on our walk; then we would have brought each other up to date and strengthened one another. The time approaches when on will have to speak of many things!...

My program is terminated; what I believed would not have to be more than a sample of my observations, will be 450 pages, without consideration of what stays and what is most important. I am truly ashamed of all these overly long passages [that I have written.]

I don't believe that it is possible to suggest a revolution that is more clear, in principle or in practice. If we are in agreement, you and I, with what I am going to publish and what I will keep in reserve, we have ten years of rule behind us. Let others fight among themselves for the Presidency of the Republic. I don't see anybody who will come close to relieving us of this post.

Until next time, then. But permit me to tell you one thing, Marc: it is that one must leave modesty to dogs, and we must take ourselves with dead seriousness. The lack of more capable men is our excuse.

I give you my hand.

P.-J. PROUDHON

P.S. If you have not misplaced my blouse, have the kindness to return it to me. It is hot here; my blouse will be useful to me.

1. Translated from the French by Stephanie Silberstein

TO MR'S. PILHES AND LANGLOIS¹

APRIL 26, 1850

Proudhon wrote this letter to two of his colleagues shortly after being arrested in April of 1850.

To see the original French, [click here](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/langlois1.html)
"http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/letters/langlois1.html"

My dear friends, I have been here since Saturday evening, the 20th. Upon arrival, I was put into solitary confinement, guarded by an armed sentry. The windows of my room face the major's house (the guardian in chief, who one sees on the rampart. Yesterday, the 24th, I was interrogated in front of the Rogatory Letters², by the most educated judge in Doullens. I will therefore be removed from here, to be sent before the Court, only to be reinterrogated afterwards. I am without news of my wife or my brother, who have made a journey of one hundred leagues to see me, and who I have only gotten a glimpse of. I judge, by their silence, that one has refused them permission to see me. Could you give them a note for me, some knowledge of my situation? I will try to escape, but I am atrociously anxious. Oh! If all that human beings did was to turn upon one another, as one says of certain animals, I would still respect them; but they have invented torture, the art of making one suffer without eating him alive; this is something to add to the list of their virtues.

It seems to me that it has been a while since I heard from Pilhes. Give me a sign of life, if it is possible

I have learned from the Monitor that you will not be deported, and that you owe this favor to I. Barrot. Is this a sign that the conservative rich, but neither the Jesuits or

the legitimates, return us their best wishes? Hope to God!

For my part, maybe after everything I would prefer Noukahiva or Waitou to six years of prison. What do you say? Are you afraid of tropics and savages?

Goodbye for now, your very sad, very desolate

P.-J. PROUDHON

1 Translated from the French by Stephanie Silberstein

2 An equivalent of a grand jury

A M. MUIRON

Correspondance de [P.J. Proudhon](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/Proudhonarchive.html)
"http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/proudhon/Proudhonarchive.html"

Cette projet est pour ma classe d'anarchie. Il est le premier du 32 Volumes, de la Librairie Internationale, Paris. Il n'ya pas de dates sur les lettres.

1)A.M. MUIRON,

Vous me demandez, Monsieur, pourquoi cette grande répugnance de ma part à signer votre journal dès mon début. Vous comprenez sans peine les raisons d'un semblable refus, quand vous saurez ce que j'ai fait jusqu'à ce jour et combien peu je suis avancé dans ma carrière littéraire. Entendons-nous d'abord; je ne crains pas mes écrits, seulement je vous demande un délai, parce que je ne veux pas être pris au dépourvu.

Entièrement Etranger par mes goûts particuliers aux querelles et aux débats politiques, je suis peut familiarisé avec le style au jargon des journaux, le genre de mes études étant presque totalement étranger aux connaissances que l'on exige d'un rédacteur; quel parti, en effet, pourriez-vous tirer, Monsieur, d'un homme qui ne s'est occupé toute sa vie que de métaphysique, de langue, de théologie?

Depuis deux ans je cours le monde, étudiant, interrogeant le petit peuple dont je me trouve plus rapproché par ma condition sociale; n'ayant guère le temps de lire, écrivant encore moins, rangeant à la hâte les idées que ma fournissent l'observation, la comparaison de tant d'objets divers; je manque totalement du talent d'écrire et de parler avec fertilité et

esprit sur toutes sortes de métiers, qualité essentielle chez un journaliste.

De tout cela je commence à m'apercevoir et je conclus que je ne suis guère l'homme qu'il vous faut; et vous m'en croirez sans peine, Monsieur, si je vous assure que je n'eusse pu songer à me présenter chez vous de mon propre mouvement, n'était toute ma déférence pour les exhortations et les conseils d'un ami (Olympe Micaut), sans lequel moi, simple compisiteur d'imprimerie, je douterais que je pusse être autre chose.

J'avais vu des rédacteurs de province; je savais de quelle façon et avec quels matériaux la plupart remplissent leur feuille, et sur cet exposé, je me flattais, ayant déjà fait quelque chose de plus difficile, ce me semble, d'en venir facilement à bout, -Ajoutez l'espoir qu'on faisait briller à mes yeux de pouvoir me livrer exclusivement à l'étude.

J'espérais de votre complaisance que vous-même me mettriez au courant d'une rédaction; je sentais le besoin de suivre quelque temps la polémique des journaux; je voulais faire connaissance avec ses gens-là; en un mot, commencer une sorte d'apprentissage.

Enfin, Monsieur, je veux avant tout consulter M. Fallot, comme j'ai eu l'honneur de vous lire. Mais je dois vous prévenir que, quelque puisse être mon sentiment, je ne consentirais à signer l'Impartial qu'à dater du 1er janvier. C'est pour moi une condition sine qua non; ce point accordé, je me prêterai à toute proposition de votre part.

Voyez donc, Monsieur, si, à l'aide d'un prête-nom, d'un homme de paille, il vous est possible de concilier votre détermination et la mienne.

Dans le cas où nous pourrions nous entendre, ma franchise me ferait encore un devoir de vous exposer mes opinions politiques, philosophiques et religieuses auxquelles j'ose dire que je ne dérogerai jamais.

P.-J. Proudhon.

2)A.M. MUIRON,

Monsieur, j'éprouve un plaisir infini à vous entendre, et j'avoue, avec un peu d'embarass, que je ne m'attendais pas à recontrer un caractère si facile, si accommodant que le vôtre.

Mes irrésolutions ne font que croître et me torturer de plus en plus. Piqué du reproche de découragement, je ne sais quel parti prendre; mais, réflexion faite, je donnerais beaucoup pour avoir refusé net dès le premier instant. Ce serait me rendre le plus grande service, et dont je serais toute ma vie reconnaissant, que nous en demeurassions là, pour tout ce qui regarde notre affaire. Rédiger un article m'épouvante plus que jamais.

Vous me demandiez hier si les opinions que je professe et qui nous sont communes, je les écrirais dans une feuille publique, et vous répondiez: "Non, sans doute." Et pourquoi non? pourquoi l'Impartial ne serait-il pas un journal républicain, à sa manière toutefois?

Pourquoi cette feuille, dont les plus nombreux abonnés sont les maires des campagnes, ne serait-elle pas indépendante de toute autorité, administration ou magistrature supérieure, nommée par le ministre ou par le roi?

Pourquoi n'admettrait-elle, ne provoquerait-elle pas les réclamations des communes contre les maires, de ceux-ci contre le préfet et les sous-préfets? Car je remarque à la lecture de cette éternelle controverse entre le Patriote et l'Impartial, qu'on reproche surtout à celui-ci d'être la feuille officielle, ministérielle, stipendiée, soutenue par l'autorité, à charge par elle de louer et préconiser tous les

actes de celle-ci. Pourquoi ne professerait-on pas publiquement un pyrrhonisme absolu sur tous les ministères passés, présents et futurs? Pourquoi n'inviterait-on pas les populations à se rendre elle-mêmes capables de gérer leurs affaires, de préparer ainsi les voies à la confédération des peuples? Qu'elles cherchent dans l'instruction, la science, la saine morale, le patriotisme, à se passer de toute hiérarchie ministérielle et constitutionnelle, tout en faisant leur profit cependant du peu de bien qu'elles en pourront recueillir.

Pour vous le dire à l'occasion du Phalanstère, dont j'ai lu attentivement le prospectus, je ne pense pas comme M. Fourier, jusqu'à plus ample informé. Jamais avec vous je n'aurai de discussion à cet égard; mais, je vous l'avoue, je serai plutôt convaincu par les faits que par les arguments ; et ceux-ci, je les comprendrai mieux, lorsque j'en verrai faire la plus heureuse application. Laissons cela.

J'ai lu aussi votre polémique avec M.A.-F.C. Elle m'a paru une dispute de mots. Mais me supposant rédacteur, je trouvais que l'arme du ridicule serait pour moi la plus redoutable; je ne tiens pas à la plus mauvaise plaisanterie.

Enfin, Monsieur, vous ne manquerez jamais de bonnes raisons pour lever tous mes scrupules, dissiper mes doutes et fixer mes incertitudes.

Je cesserai donc de chercher des motifs à mon refus. C'est impuissance complète, c'est répugnance invincible, c'est. . .c'est enfantillage, si vous voulez. Je ne me connais point, j'étais entraîné par le désir de correspondre aux vœux d'amis tels que Micaud et Fallot: ma bonne volonté m'a trompé.

Arrêtons-nous quand il en est temps encore. Epargnons-nous à tous deux une fâcheuse expérience .

Voici, Monsieur, ma définitive résolution, et en même temps la dernière entrevue que j'aurai l'honneur d'avoir

avec vous, jusqu'à ce qu'il soit bien sûr que toute négociation nouvelle à l'égard de notre affaire est désormais impossible. Je dis la Dernière entrevue, en supposant toutefois que vous un commerce de conversation ou de lettres, encore plus agréable qu'utile. Si vous étiez embarrassé de trouver un gérant, je vous offrirais mes faibles services pour vous trouver un homme plus capable, de tout point, que moi pour cette besogne.

Je sens que j'aurais besoin de travailler six mois au moins à de sérieuses études, de donner l'éveil à mes idées, de les digérer, de les mettre en ordre, avant d'oser écrire un seul mot pour le publier, chose que je m'obstine à regarder comme plus importante que vous n'en convenez; et au bout de ce temps, je refuserais vos offres avec d'autant plus de fermeté que je serais mieux instruit et plus capable. Brisons donc là, s'il vous plaît.

Je me suis examiné sérieusement, j'ai consulté des personnes sensées, lesquelles sont entrées parfaitement dans mes raisons.

Mon travail d'imprimerie, me déroband à mes lectures, me laisse pleine et entière liberté d'esprit pour la méditation. Le journal m'obligerait à lire journaux et brochures nouvelles, toutes choses insupportables pour moi, me fatiguerait par une contention d'esprit perpétuelle, absorbé que je serais entièrement par la controverse et la polémique continuelle. En somme, je vois de grandes chances d'ennui et des tribulations, contre de très-minimes, pour ne pas dire nulles, de gloire et de satisfaction.

P.-J. Proudhon.

Monsieur, vous m'avez témoigné si souvent tant de bienveillance, d'intérêt, je peux dire d'amitié, que vous témoigne un peu de reconnaissance, mais à ma façon. Vous savez que je m'occupe quelque peu de l'étude des langues: je viens d'imprimer un petit essai de grammaire générale qui paraîtra à la suite des éléments du célèbre Bergier. J'ai l'honneur de vous offrir l'un et l'autre.

Si je ne me flatte pas trop, j'espère que vous trouverez dans cet essai assez court, des choses toutes nouvelles et curieuses. Du moins, c'est le jugement qu'en ont déjà porté quelques personnes de mérite. Si vous avez du temps à perdre à une pareille lecture, je ne crois pas trop présumer de votre complaisance accoutumée pour espérer que vous ne m'épargnerez aucune observation. Puis, si vous jugez que la chose vaille la peine d'être communiquée au public, je me repose entièrement sur vous du soin de faire ou faire faire une petite annonce de notre nouvelle publication dans le journal dont je vous regarde toujours comme le modérateur. Seulement, je désirerais qu'au lieu de m'y faire connaître par mon propre et privé nom, il n'y eût été cité que le nom de l'imprimerie Lambert. Vous devinez aisément les motifs qui me font je fais partie, à la mienne.

En ce moment, je me livre à des études assez étendues et très-importantes sur les langues. Si mon coup d'essai réussit, il ne doit pas s'ensuivre moins d'une révélation grammaticale, car, les principes admis, il faudra parcourir toute la série des conséquences. J'espère aller loin dans cette carrière que j'embrasse et dans laquelle j'ai cru apercevoir que, jusqu'à ce jour on n'avait fait que des reconnaissances. Or, je crois me rappeler que vous m'aviez autrefois parlé d'un auteur distingué en ces

matières. Ne pourrais-je, par votre obligeance, en avoir communication pour quelques jours. Je vais vite en besogne et, grâce à la méthode que je me suis faite et dont je recueille déjà les fruits, j'apprends toujours plus de choses dans la meilleure grammaire que l'auteur n'en soupçonnait.

Voilà bien des services demandés, et vous devez trouver mon petit cadeau fort intéressé. Mais l'amitié est inépuisable, et la franchise ne sait pas supposer la dissimulation.

Je suis toujours celui que vous avez connu rêvant, philosophant, réformant, et mieux encore, votre tout dévoué.

P.-J. Proudhon.

4) A.M. MUIRON,

Monsieur Muiron, je suis vraiment honteux de n'aller vous voir que lorsque j'ai besoin de vous, d'autant plus que je sens encore le reproche assez piquant que vous m'avez fait de mon manque d'exactitude. Il semble que vous ne m'ayez pas encore jugé. Cependant, vous ne devriez pas avoir de peine à comprendre que je suis si nouveau dans la société et la civilisation, que je ne connais encore du monde que les maisons et les rues. Oui, j'éprouve encore cette sotte honte d'un berger que l'on veut faire entrer dans un salon. Je crains, comme des bêtes effrayantes, les visages que je n'ai jamais vus, je recule toujours à voir les gens même qui peuvent m'être utiles et me vouloir du bien; je n'ai de présence d'esprit et d'aplomb que lorsque je me vois seul et que c'est ma plume qui parle. Mérite fort commun, mais que voulez-

vous?je[sic]sais que je ne brille ni par les dehors, ni par l'élocution; j'aime mieux n'être vu ni connu de personne. Je me fais un plaisir de vous dire que l'on me mitonne un article dans leNationalpour je ne sais quand. Je sais déjà que le fort de la discussion roulera sur ces singulières conséquences que je me suis avisé de prétendre, que l'on déduirait un jour et d'une mani&egravre démonstrative, de la comparaison des langues, savoir: l'époque à laquelle le genre humain a dû commencer à races humaines, et le lieu où fut placé le berceau du genre humain. Il est vrai personne, avant moi, ne s'avisa jamais d'idées aussi extraordinaires, je puis le dire; mais j'espère, quand la bataille se donnera, réduire les incrédules au silence. Il y a des gens qui n'admettraient pas les vérités mathématiques, s'ils croyaient qu'elles pussent donner raison à quelque partie des traditions sociales universelles ou de la Genèse de Moïse. Je sais que cette philosophie mesquine n'est pas le vôtre, et je crois que le temps est bien venu où la raison ne doit reculer devant la conséquence d'aucun principe certain et bien constaté. Que pense-cette proposition: L'étude du langage établira un jour duisent à SEPT qui sont comme les sept sens ou facultés de la nature morale; qu'il n'y en a ni plus ni moins, qu'il est impossible d'en imaginer davantage, et organisés entre eux comme la flûte de Pan aux sept tuyaux, n'a jamais pu être découverte par l'homme, mais qu'elle lui a été enseignée par une révélation immédiate! Que dirait-on, si je soutenais qu'on jour l'étude du langage et de la physiologie nous rapprochera tellement de Dieu, que nous croirons le voir et le toucher? Les matérialistes qui nient tout ce qui n'est pas rapport, machine, équilibre de fluide ou de poids, les prêtres, qui croient avoir seuls la science de Dieu et de l'homme, tous ces gens-là et bien d'autres crieront à la folie et au scandale.

Ou je suis fou, complètement fou, ou je vois certainement des choses dont la conséquence nécessaire, immédiate infaillible, sera le changement de la société, qui donnerait à l'axe terrestre 10 degrés